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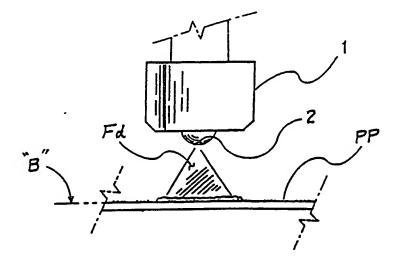
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(54) Title: METHOD FOR APPLYING A FILM COATING OF A LIQUID HOT SOLDER RESIST AGENT AND A RESIST COMPOSITION FOR USE WITH THE METHOD



(57) Abstract

A method of applying a uniform thickness layer of hot solder resist on printed circuit board (PP) containing a raised pattern of conductive paths of predetermined thickness having edge surfaces disposed perpendicular to the upper surfaces of the raised conductive paths. The method includes emitting the hot solder resist in a dovetail flat fan liquid film (Fd) pattern from an airless spray gun (2), and locating the printed circuit board below the emitted dovetail liquid film pattern at a distance such that the upper surface of the printed circuit board intersects the dovetail liquid film above the point at which the liquid film starts to brake-up into liquid particles. The hot solder resist has a moderate viscosity and contains both high and low boiling point solvents to allow the coating to even out without unnecessarily thinning at points above the upper edges of the raised printed circuit conductive paths.

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METHOD FOR APPLYING A FILM COATING OF A LIQUID HOT SOLDER RESIST AGENT AND A RESIST COMPOSITION FOR USE WITH THE METHOD

Detailed Description of the Invention

Field of Industrial Application

The invention pertains to a method for applying a film coating of a liquid hot solder resist agent for wiring patterns on printed-circuit boards and a resist composition for the method.

Conventional Techniques

pattern on a printed-circuit board, i.e., as a way to prevent the flow of molten solder from spreading in a soldering operation, a method of affixing a filmy hot solder resist to said board, the so-called dry film process, has been used increasingly of late. To sum up, this method affixes a film of the above-mentioned hot solder resist over the surface of a pattern consisting of a great number of wires, i.e., filiform copper foil, which has been imprinted on a printed-circuit board, consisting of through holds (holes in which to insert IC-attaching legs). A film (artwork) on which the required wiring pattern is drawn is

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placed on the resist film and exposed to ultraviolet light, whereby the above-mentioned wiring pattern is cured, then the uncured section of the film except for the wiring pattern is peeled off, so that the above-mentioned wiring pattern is left on the printed-circuit board. Accordingly, the wiring pattern is left on the printed-circuit board. Accordingly, the wiring pattern is covered by the cured film and thus the flow of solder in soldering the IC legs inserted in the above-mentioned through holes can be prevented.

However, the above-mentioned dry film resist process is costly because it makes use of relatively expensive materials, and it is also very difficult to completely automate this process. For these reasons, other methods have been explored, and lately it has become customary for printed-circuit board makers to purchase a liquid hot solder resist then apply it directly.

The coating methods currently employed for the above-mentioned liquid hot solder resist include screen printing, roll coating, and curtain coating.

However, there are various problems with these methods.

Before going into these problems, we will describe the high-density, fine structure of the printed-circuit boards to be treated by these methods.

One recent example is a package-type DIP (dual inline package) that is being used most frequently at present, in which the distance between the component holes

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(pins) is 100 mil (2.54 mm) as shown in Figure 6, and the degree of the fine pattern is represented by the number of wires to be placed in this space. Those with 2 wires are being produced in the largest numbers at present, but those with 3 wires are also in demand. These wires, of course, consist of printed filiform copper foil. A solder resist is formed in order to prevent molten solder from flowing and coming into contact with the copper foil wires when inserting the component (IC) legs in the through holes and soldering these legs, as shown in Figure 7.

We now describe problems that may be encountered when forming the above-mentioned solder resist, i.e., applying a liquid hot solder resist agent (hereinafter abbreviated as a liquid resist), by the above-mentioned methods.

(1) Screen Printing Method

This method is a so-called copying method which prints a liquid resist (Lsr) on a printed-circuit 20 board (PP) placed underneath a screen (Sc) by pressing the liquid resist against the screen with a squeeze roller (R), as shown in Figure 11A. When pressing the liquid resist with the squeeze roller (R), localization or thinning (Lsr3) of the coating occurs at the edges at the upper surfaces of the wires (copper foils), as shown in Figure 11B. Furthermore, there are various drawbacks such that the above-mentioned liquid resist does not penetrate well into the gaps between the

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wiring patterns (WP) on the said board (PP), or conversely the liquid resist enters the through holes, which causes difficulty when removing the uncured liquid resist.

(2) Roll Coating Method

This method applies a liquid resist to a printed-circuit board using a roll (roller), and problems occur that are almost identical to those in the above-mentioned screen method.

(3) Curtain Coating Method

This method applies a film coating to a printed-circuit board (PP) by allowing a liquid resist to fall by its own weight in the form of a curtain (Fc) from a slit die, as shown in Figure 12. Accordingly, the whole upper surface of the wiring pattern (WP) is coated with the liquid resist, but layerthinning at the edges as in the above-mentioned paragraph cannot be avoided. Furthermore, because the liquid resist falls in the form of a curtain, the resist is exposed to the air for a relatively long time, during which the solvent contained in said liquid resist evaporate, s, thus the concentration changes, and consequently, so does the thickness of the coating film. It is therefore necessary to install devices to constantly control these parameters, which add to the number of process steps and the facility cost.

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Problems to be Solved

As described above, the conventional liquid resist coating operations result in layer-thinning at the edges over wiring patterns and also poor film formation between individual wiring patterns. Besides, any of these coating devices requires a relatively large number of process steps and are rather large in size and cost.

The incentive for the present invention was

in solving these problems and in forming a better

solder resist more simply.

An Approach to Solving the Problems

The main feature of the invention is to provide a method for applying a liquid hot solder resist agent in the form of a film from an airless spray nozzle, as well as an actual liquid hot solder resist agent that is suitable for said method.

The above-mentioned film-forming coating process with an airless spray nozzle is described below.

Originally, liquid spraying was a process for applying a coating by ejecting a liquid from a nozzle, atomizing said liquid, and making the atomized particles adhere to the surface of a material in the form of a uniformly thick film. There are two spraying methods, i.e., air spraying and airless spraying. In the former method, a liquid is sucked into a pipe according to Bernoulli's theorem when air passes

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through said pipe at high speed, and said liquid is ejected into the air from a nozzle and atomized according to the expansion and diffusion of the air, or said liquid is ejected from a nozzle under high pressure and air is immediately blown against the ejected liquid stream, so that said stream is broken into pieces and atomized. The latter method pressurizes the liquid to several tens of kg/cm² without using air at all, where said compressed liquid is atomized simultaneously as it undergoes rapid expansion and diffusion when it is ejected into the air through a nozzle orifice.

In the above-mentioned airless spraying, however, when the liquid is ejected from a nozzle, especially from a flat spray nozzle, it is not atomized for some distance from the orifice, but instead forms dovetail-shaped film as shown in Figures 1A and 1B.

This is called a "dovetail" phenomenon, in short, a "tail" phenomenon. The distance " " of the dovetail from the nozzle orifice depends on the characteristics of the liquid, but it is experimentally confirmed that this distance is proportional to the viscosity of the liquid and inversely proportional to the pressure force applied to the liquid, which is the same with regard to any liquid. The distance " " ranges from a minimum of about 3 mm to a maximum of about 20 mm.

The essential part of the invention comprises ejection of a liquid resist from an airless

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spray nozzle (1) as shown in Figure 2, with application of said resist taking place at the bottom ("B" line) of the dovetail-shaped liquid film (Fd) of the resist that is in contact with the surface of the printed-circuit board(PP), as shown in Figure 3.

This method will now be described in further detail. As described above, the distance " " of the dovetail-shaped liquid film between the nozzle orifice (2) and the bottom line "B", differs with the characteristics of the liquid being used, but it is enough for the distance " " to be about 5 mm when coating the surface of a printed-circuit board.

General liquid resists have a viscosity of about 400 cps, and a distance " " of about 2 mm at a liquid pressure of 60 kg/cm² when such a resist is used. However, because the above-mentioned viscosity causes a problem when a liquid resist is used in the invention method, a further improved resist must be used. This point will be described later.

20 The merits when a liquid resist is applied to the printed-circuit board surface along the "B" line at a dovetail length of about 5 mm are described below. The reader should refer to Figures 4 and 5.

This method appears, at a glance, to bear a close resemblance to the known curtain coating method (Figure 12A), but actually differs greatly. The differences can be listed as follows.

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(1) In the curtain coating method, the film hangs down in the form of a curtain (Fc) and reaches the surface of the printed-circuit board (PP) by its own weight, adhering to said surface. Accordingly, the exerted pressure force for adhesion is only the actual weight of said liquid film and is extremely weak. That is, the liquid film rests only lightly on the printed-circuit board surface, thus the film sometimes enfolds air; it is also difficult to make the film penetrate deep into the fine uneven gaps.

As opposed to this, the invention method provides a moderate ejection force to the liquid from the nozzle orifice (2), and this force propels the liquid against the printed-circuit board (PP) as shown in Figures 2-5. However, this force is not so large as to reflect or scatter the liquid, but is enough to press the liquid against said board; thus the liquid is pressed, expends, penetrates into the fine uneven gaps, and also covers the side surfaces of the copper foil. Therefore, a perfect coating will be formed.

sufficiently coat the vertical side surfaces of the filiform copper foil used as printed wires. As can be seen in Figure 12, the curtain drops vertically and thus the liquid resist does not adhere well to the side surfaces of the copper foil, which are parallel to the curtain.

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In the invention method, however, the liquid resist (Lsr) is sprayed radially downward as shown in Figure 8, thus the liquid layer Lsr₁ adheres evenly to the side surfaces of the copper foil being used as printed wires (WP).

(3) In the curtain coating method, the liquid film adheres to the top surfaces of the copper foil but thins (Lsr₄) at both edges of said copper foil, as it flows down by its own weight along the edges at the top surfaces of the copper foil.

In the invention method, on the other hand, a filmy disordered layer (Lsr₁ in Figure 8) is formed as a result of the impingement of the liquid film as described in the above paragraph (1), and hence the flow of the film in one direction as mentioned above does not occur so easily, so that the layer thinning mentioned above is less likely to occur. In addition, because a liquid resist with a moderate viscosity is used, as will be described later, the phenomenon of the resist flowing down from the copper foil surface is reduced.

(4) In the curtain coating method, the liquid film (Fe) is exposed to the air for a relatively long period while it falls from the slit opening so that the volatile components in said liquid evaporate, and this evaporation is extremely unstable as it is largely influenced by room temperature or other temperatures.

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In the invention method, the liquid is ejected from a nozzle, so the ejection time is very short and accordingly the variation in the amount evaporated is small. Furthermore, because the liquid is circulated through a closed system and ejected from a nozzle installed within said system, as shown in Figure 10, the proportion of volatile components can be maintained constant and an unvarying coating can always be applied.

10 (5) In the curtain coating method, the width of the film discharged is determined by the slit width, but in the invention method, this width is about 10 mm and the width of the printed-circuit board to be coated can be covered by automatically passing this width over the board several times.

In addition, the equipment according to the invention method has many advantages including reduced facility cost.

However, when applying a liquid resist coating with the above-mentioned airless spray nozzle, it is desirable to use a liquid resist whose composition is most suited to the said method. This composition is described in detail below.

Liquid hot solder resist agents originally

25 contained a relatively large amount of volatile

solvent. Of the volatile solvents used, there are

those with high boiling points and those with low

boiling points. The boiling point differences have a

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large effect on the liquid resist coating film applied to the printed-circuit board.

For example, when the resist agent contains a high-boiling volatile solvent, the liquid resist applied to a printed-circuit board will form a film over an uneven pattern on said board, as shown in Figure 13, but the film flows with the passage of time (about 1 minute), resulting in uneven thickness, as shown in Figure 14, and then sets in this state. This thinning of the film is not desirable.

when the resist agent contains a low-boiling volatile solvent, the same state as mentioned above (refer to Figure 13) is produced at the time of coating, but the volatile component immediately evaporates and the film sets in roughly the same state it was in immediately after coating (Figure 13). That is, practically no evening out takes place. This is also undesirable.

It is preferred that levelling out occurs to
a moderate degree. In order to achieve this, we
conducted various experiments by mixing a high-boiling
solvent and a low-boiling solvent in different proportions and obtained relatively good results with the
following composition, namely:

- (a) photosensitive epoxy resin 20%
 - (b) curing agent (containing fine talc powder and alumina) as a component mixed in the main solvent and an additive 4%

		-12-	
		ellosolve acetate as the high- biling solvent	26%
		thylene glycol methyl ether the high-boiling solvent	20%
5		ethyl ethyl ether as the ow-boiling solvent	30%
	The de:	Eiciencies of a resist containing	a
	single solvent as	s mentioned earlier can be compens	sated
	for by a composit	te resist in which a high-boiling	
LO	solvent and a lov	w boiling solvent are mixed, as	
	described above.	That is, a satisfactory coating	
٠	(Lsr ₂) in which	the liquid resist properly levels	out
	(refer to Figure	9) can be formed on the printed-	
	circuit board su	rface.	
L5	One ex	ample of data in film-forming coa	ting
	ormanimonts for	the limid regist of the above-	

experiments for the liquid resist of the above-
mentioned composition is as follows:

	(1)	liquid resist:	The above-mentioned composition
	(2)	liquid resist viscosity:	
20	(3)	liquid pressure:	1.7 kg/cm ²
	(4)	nozzle:	Nordson cross-cut nozzle (orifice diameter, 0.18 mm)
25	(5)	ejected amount	20 L/min
	(6)	pattern size	<pre>length of the dovetail, 5 mm</pre>
		-	width of the dovetail, 8 mm
30	(7)	distance from the nozzle to the printed-circuit board:	4 mm

(8) repeated scanning width in coating 6 mm

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- (9) coating speed: 24 mm/sec
- (10) coating thickness
 (refer to Figure 9):
 - (a) on the printed board: 35 1
 - (b) on the pattern (on the printed wires (WP)): 20 1.5
 - (c) at the edges of the wires (WP), i.e., the copper foil: 10 2

The above data are only one example.

Satisfactory results were obtained even under the following varied conditions. That is, the suitable viscosity for the above-mentioned item (2) is in the range of 20-50 cps. Good results were also obtained at a liquid pressure (item (3)) of 1 kg/cm² for a low viscosity of 10 cps, at 3 kg/cm² for a high viscosity of 100 cps, and at 4.5 kg/cm² for a high viscosity of 150 cps (the orifice diameter is 0.15 mm¢).

composition contains a nonvolatile component whose content is adjusted to 10% to 40% and a volatile solvent component that is a composite of high-boiling components with boiling points of 100°C to 210°C and low-boiling components with boiling points of 30°C to 100°C, the mixing weight ratio for this composite solvent being adjusted to 40% to 95% for the high-boiling solvent and 60% to 5% for the low-boiling solvent.

Advantages

According to the method and the composition of the invention, a liquid hot solder resist agent coating that is uniformly thick and that levels out can be applied to a high-density printed-circuit board; thus the invention will contribute greatly by improving the soldering operation efficiency for said printed-circuit boards and by improving the quality of the printed-circuit boards.

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Brief Description of the Figures

Figure 1A is a front view of the dovetail phenomenon in airless spraying, which is to be utilized in the invention. Figure 1B is a side view of Figure 1A. Figure 2 is a diagram illustrating the bottom section of the above-mentioned dovetail, which is to be utilized in the invention. Figure 3 is a diagram illustrating the state of applying the above-mentioned dovetail bottom section to a printed-circuit board to form a coating film. Figure 4 is an oblique view of Figure 3. Figure 5 is a diagram illustrating the state of applying a flat coating by scanning the printed circuit board to sequentially apply plural overlapped ribbons of coating. Figure 6 is a plan view of one example of a high-density printed wiring pattern (DIP). Figure 7 is a side cross-sectional view of Figure 6. Figure 8 is a diagram illustrating the state of applying a liquid hot solder resist agent

over a printed wiring pattern, according to the invention. Figure 9 is a diagram illustrating the levelled out and set state of Figure 8, after coating. Figure 10 is a system diagram of the closed system of airless spray equipment used in the invention. Figure 5 11A is a front view of a known screen printing device. Figure 11B is an enlargement of section "E" in Figure 11A. Figure 12A is a front view of a known curtain coater. Figure 12B is an enlargement of section "F" in Figure 12A. Figure 13 is a diagram illustrating 10 the state immediately after a liquid hot solder resist agent containing a high-boiling solvent is applied to a printed-circuit board. Figure 14 is a diagram illustrating the set state after about 1 minute, for Figure 13. 15

Description of Major Symbols

(1) airless spray nozzle; (Fd) dovetailshaped liquid film; (Lsr) liquid hot solder resist
20 agent; (PP) printed-circuit board; and (WP) wiring
pattern.

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CLAIMS

- 1. A method of applying a uniform thickness layer of hot solder resist on a printed circuit board containing a pattern of conductive paths, comprising the steps of:
- emitting a liquid stream of hot solder resist from the orifice of an airless spray gun in a dovetail-shaped flat fan liquid film pattern having a lower edge below which the liquid film breaks-up into liquid particles,
- locating the printed circuit board below the airless spray gun orifice at a distance such that the upper surface of the printed circuit board intersects the dovetail-shaped liquid film above the lower edge thereof below which the dovetail-shaped liquid film breaks-up into liquid particles, and
 - moving the spray gun orifice and printed circuit board transversely relative to each other such that different portions of the printed circuit board are successively impinged with the dovetail-shaped liquid film of hot solder resist to thereby sequentially coat said different portions of said printed circuit board.

- 2. The method of claim 1 wherein said locating step includes locating the printed circuit board approximately 4 mm below the airless spray gun orifice, and the emitting step includes emitting a dovetail liquid film having a height of about 5 mm defined by the distance between the orifice and the lower edge of the dovetail liquid film
- 3. The method of claim 2 wherein the
 10 emitting step includes emitting a liquid resist having
 a viscosity of approximately 30 cps at a pressure of
 approximately 1.7 Kg/cm².
- 4. The method of claim 3 wherein the

 emitting step includes emitting the liquid resist
 through a cross-cut nozzle having an orifice of
 approximately 0.18 mm diameter.
- 5. The method of claim 1 wherein the
 20 emitting step includes emitting a liquid resist
 containing a mixture of solvents of differing boiling
 points.
- 6. The method of claim 5 wherein the
 25 emitting step includes emitting a liquid resist in the
 approximate viscosity range of 10-150 cps at a pressure
 of approximately 1-4.5 Kg/cm².

- The method of claim 1 wherein the 7. emitting step includes emitting a liquid resist containing a nonvolatile component in the approximate weight percentage range of 10%-40% and a volatile solvent component in the approximate weight percentage 5 range of 60%-90% that is a composite of high-boiling point solvents in the approximate boiling point range of 100°C - 210°C and low-boiling point solvents in the approximate boiling point range of 30°C - 100°C, with mixing weight ratio for the composite solvent being 10 adjusted between the approximate range of 40%-95% for the high-boiling solvents and 5%-60% for the lowboiling solvents.
- 8. The method of claim 1 wherein the emitting step includes emitting a liquid resist containing approximately 20% by weight of ethylene glycol ether and approximately 30% by weight of methyl ethyl ether and approximately 25% by weight of Cellusolve acetate.

- The method of claim 1 wherein the 9. emitting step includes emitting a liquid resist having composite solvent including at least one solvent having a relatively low boiling point and at least one solvent having a relatively high boiling point, and 5 wherein the method includes providing a printed circuit board with a raised pattern of predetermined thickness conductive paths on the surface thereof which have edge faces and top faces disposed perpendicularly relative to each other, whereby the resist 10 coating applied to the printed circuit board evens out over the top faces of the raised pattern of conductive paths provided on the surface of the printed circuit board without unnecessarily thinning at points above the upper edges of the raised printed circuit conduc-15 tive paths.
- 10. The method of claim 9 wherein said emitting step includes emitting said liquid resist

 20 over a range of directions to substantially uniformly coat both the edge and top faces of the conductive paths.

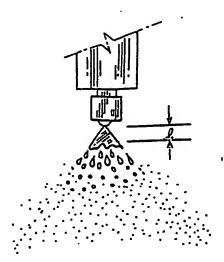


FIG. IA

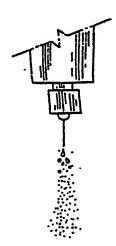


FIG. IB

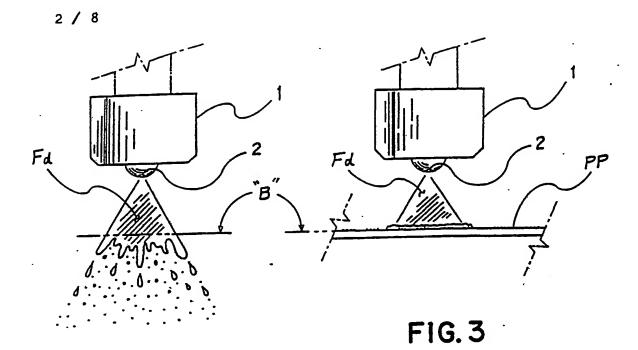


FIG.2

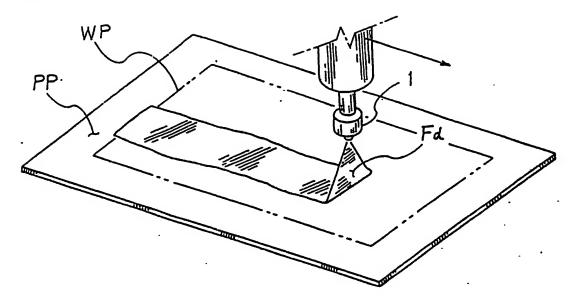


FIG.4

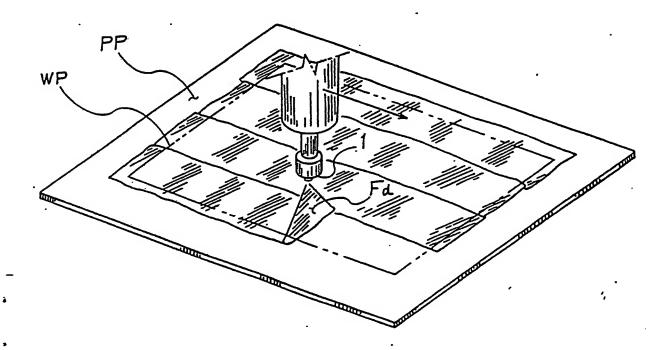


FIG.5

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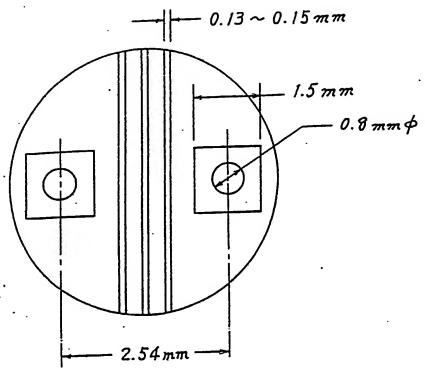


FIG. 6

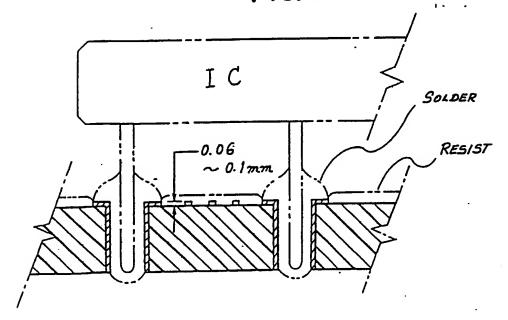


FIG.7

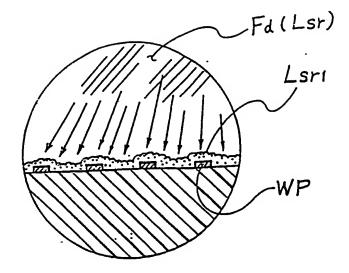


FIG.8

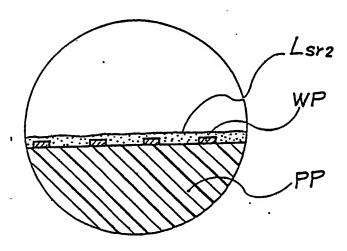
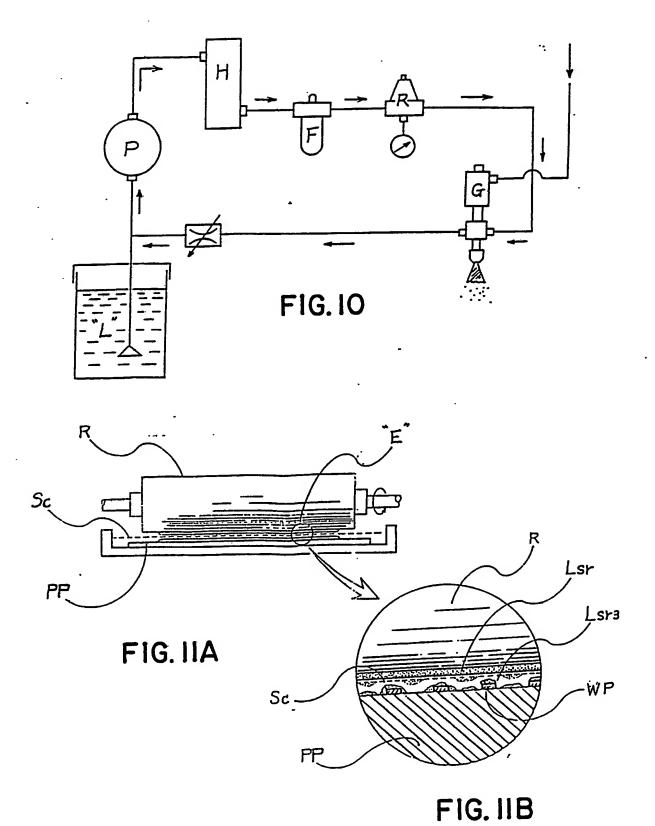


FIG.9



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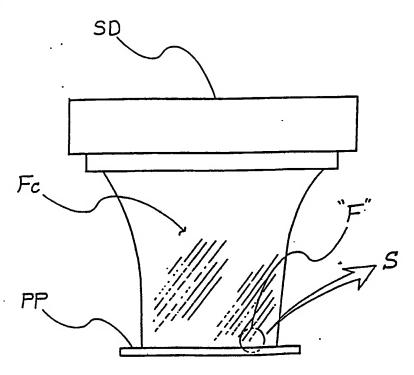
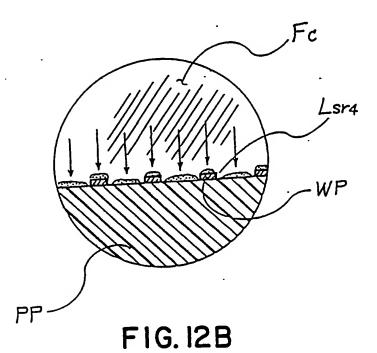


FIG. 12A



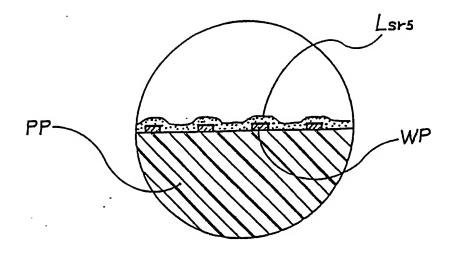


FIG. 13

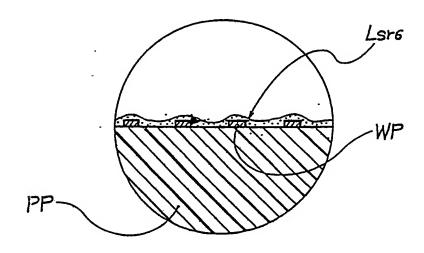


FIG.14

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No. PCT/US88/03044

international expiration No. 17(1) 05007 05044						
I. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER (if several classification symbols apply, indicate all) 6						
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both National Classification and IPC						
		26/00				
		6, 420, 421, 207.1				
II. FIELD	S SEARCH					
		Minimum Docume	ntation Searched 7			
Classificati	ion System		Classification Symbols	<u> </u>		
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III. DOCI	JMENTS C	ONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT 9				
Category *	Citati	on of Document, 11 with Indication, where app	propriate, of the relevant passages 12	Relevant to Claim No. 13-		
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Y,P	3,	US, A, 4,753,819 (SHIMADA) 28 June 1988. See column 3, lines 14-24, 28-32, 51-54; column 4, lines 35-37; column 8, lines 3-16; claim 4.				
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	•	h may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or	cannot be considered novel or involve an inventive step	cannot be considered to		
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		r special reason (as specified) ling to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or	cannot be considered to involve a document is combined with one	or more other such docu-		
oth	er means		ments, such combination being o	bvious to a person skilled		
"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed "&" document member of the same patent family						
IV. CERTIFICATION						
Date of the	e Actual Cor	npletion of the International Search	Date of Mailing of this International Ser			
05 Octobor 1988			29 NOV 198	K i		
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International Searching Authority Signature of Authorized Officer						
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